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ABSTRACT

A study examined the influence of behavioral activities such as teaching, research, and service on faculty career satisfaction using Astin's theory of involvement. The research tested Astin's theory in predicting variations in career satisfaction by disciplinary category, and the contention that disciplinary differences are critical for understanding faculty culture. The study utilized data obtained from a survey of 35,478 full-time undergraduate faculty, 13,810 of which were in the arts and sciences, designed to gather information on teaching and research activities, interactions with students and colleagues, and job satisfaction. Also used was the input-environment-output approach designed for measuring college impact and evaluating educational programs. Evaluation of the research showed that salary and interest in research are significant predictors of career satisfaction for all arts and science faculty. Only when separate analyses are run by broad disciplinary groups, however, does one find that the influence of these predictors varies considerably between groups. Overall, the research indicated that Clark appears correct in contending that the members of the American professorate are relatively satisfied with their careers; the study also supports Clark's contention that disciplinary differences are crucial in understanding faculty culture. (Contains 15 references.) (GLR)

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Disciplinary Differences in Faculty Career Satisfaction

A Paper Presented at the
ASHE Annual Meeting, Minneapolis
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ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Marriott City Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 29 - November 1, 1992. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Clark has argued that in order to understand the culture of the academic profession, researchers in higher education must focus more attention on disciplinary and institutional locations, rather than on just demographic characteristics. "To comprehend the divisions of the profession, it is more important to know that individuals are physicists, biologists, political scientists, or English professors, or that they are in a medical school or a business school, than it is to know that they are young or old, Protestant, Jewish, or Catholic, registered as a Republican or Democrat -- or increasingly, black or white, female or male." (Clark, 1987, p. 108). Clark's national survey of faculty was designed to examine disciplinary and institutional differences along a number of dimensions of the American academic profession. Qualitative data was gathered from faculty and administrators in six different disciplines in a variety of different institutional settings. Based on this data, Clark concluded that the American professoriate had relatively high levels of career satisfaction based on such intrinsic motivators as the rewards inherent in doing academic work, recognition from peers and students, and control over time. Given the limited number of departments represented in the study, however, the data could not be aggregated into broader disciplinary categories.

One of the main purposes of the study was designed to test empirically Clark's contention that disciplinary differences are critical for understanding faculty culture. If Clark is correct, then one would expect to find significant differences between disciplinary groupings on measures of career satisfaction. Are faculty in the physical sciences more satisfied with their careers than faculty in the fine arts? Are humanities faculty more willing to choose academe again than faculty in the biological sciences? Are social science faculty more likely to have considered leaving academe for another career than physical science faculty? One of the purposes of the study then was to determine whether there are disciplinary differences in faculty career satisfaction.

Clark also found that the involvement of faculty in research, teaching and service activities varies considerably by discipline. Given these disciplinary differences in faculty involvements, a second purpose of the study was to examine the implications of these differences for career satisfaction. Most previous research studies on career satisfaction have utilized Herzberg's dual factor theory (1959) as its theoretical framework (Stecklein & Eckert, 1958; Whitlock, 1965; Swierenga, 1970; Avakian, 1971; Eckert & Williams, 1972; Leon, 1973; Moxley, 1977; Willie & Stecklein, 1982). This theory tends to emphasize the influence of psychological states rather than behavioral activities on career satisfaction. As a consequence, there has been considerably less research conducted on the impact that behavioral activities such as teaching, research, and service have on career satisfaction.

This study was designed to examine the influence of these behavioral activities on faculty career satisfaction by using Astin's theory of involvement, rather than Herzberg's dual factor theory. The theory of involvement holds that learning and development is a function of the amount of physical and psychic time and energy that individuals invest in the learning process (Astin, 1985). Although involvement theory evolved from research conducted with college students, Astin has argued that the theory can be applied with equal validity to faculty development. As applied to faculty, involvement theory would seem to predict that the more involved faculty are with their college or university environment, the more fully their talents will develop and the more satisfied they will be with their career. This study is designed to test the utility of Astin's theory of involvement in predicting variations in career satisfaction by disciplinary category.

Research Design

Sample and Definitions

The study utilized data gathered on full-time undergraduate faculty by the 1989-90 HERI Faculty Survey. The survey was designed to gather information on faculty

teaching and research activities, interactions with students and colleagues, and job satisfaction. It was administered to approximately 93,000 faculty at 432 institutions of higher education during the fall of 1989. After two waves, 51,574 faculty responded, for a response rate of 55.2%. Out of this group, 35,478 faculty were further identified as full-time undergraduate faculty, defined as those faculty who had indicated that they were employed full-time at their institution, for whom teaching was their principal activity, and who had taught at least one undergraduate level course in the last term. Out of this group of full-time undergraduate faculty, 13,810 faculty were further identified as belonging to one of five arts and science categories: biological sciences, humanities, fine arts, physical sciences, and social sciences. These five arts and science categories were the ones utilized for the purposes of this study. The number of faculty within each of these five arts and science categories included 1,868 biological sciences faculty; 3,035 humanities faculty; 2,351 physical sciences faculty; 4,062 social sciences faculty; and 3,032 fine arts faculty.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, faculty career satisfaction, was created by summing the responses to three questions on the 1989-90 HERI Faculty Survey. The first question asked faculty "if you were to begin your career again, would you still want to be a college professor", with 5 response categories ranging from definitely yes to definitely no. The second question asked faculty to indicate how satisfied they were with their overall job satisfaction, with 4 response categories ranging from very satisfied to not satisfied. The last question asked faculty if during the last two years they had considered leaving academe for another career. These three variables had factor loadings of .70 or above on the career satisfaction scale. This career satisfaction scale was then used as the dependent variable in five separate regression equations, one for faculty in the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, and physical sciences.

Methodology

The methodology for this study used an input-environment-output (I-E-O) approach designed for measuring college impact and evaluating educational programs (Astin, 1970a, 1970b). In the model all variables are placed under the headings of either input, environment, or output. There is an implicit assumption that variables in the input and environment categories must be controlled sequentially to determine their unique and joint effects on outcomes. In the model an attempt is made to create statistical controls to conduct a "quasi-experiment" where such controls do not normally exist.

The I-E-O model is parsimonious by design. In the theory it is argued that in a typical educational setting the subjects (inputs) have not been randomly assigned to different educational treatments (environments). Thus, faculty entering different educational environments must first be "equated" statistically before valid inferences about environmental effects can be drawn. To assume that inputs determine the outcome is the most parsimonious inference. However, this assumption can be refuted if significant environmental effects can be demonstrated. Using a "blocked" form of regression, entering faculty characteristics are entered as a first block in a regression equation to control for their influence on the dependent variable. Between-college and within-college environmental characteristics are then entered in subsequent blocks to determine their additional predictive power after the influence of the input characteristics has been partialled out. Allowing the variables to enter a regression equation in this fashion creates a conservative test of the impact of different college environmental variables on faculty career satisfaction.

Results

The findings of a oneway analysis of variance for career satisfaction by disciplinary type are presented in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Significant differences in career satisfaction were found between the five different arts and science disciplinary types examined in this study. Differences in satisfaction by discipline were also reported in another recent study (Ethington, Smart, & Zeltman, 1989). The importance of disaggregating data by disciplinary type in examining faculty career satisfaction is reinforced by these findings.

The number of faculty who considered leaving academe by disciplinary type is presented in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Slightly over one-third of all arts and science faculty responded that they have considered leaving academe. The fact that almost two-thirds of arts and science faculty have not considered leaving academe lends support to Clark's contention that the American professoriate tends to be relatively satisfied with their careers. Faculty in the humanities were the least likely to have considered leaving academe, with slightly over one-quarter having done so. Using this as the indicator, humanities faculty appear to be relatively satisfied with their careers. This finding may, however, simply reflect the fact that humanities faculty have fewer alternatives for employment outside of academe than faculty in other arts and science disciplines. Fine arts faculty were the most likely of all arts and science faculty to have considered leaving academe for another career. This finding provides evidence that fine arts faculty are less satisfied with their careers than other arts and science faculty. This lower satisfaction among fine arts faculty may reflect, in part, the difficulty they face in having their creative works count as alternatives to publications in tenure and promotion decisions.

The number of faculty who indicated that if they were to begin their career again, they would still want to be a college professor, broken down by disciplinary type, is presented in Table 3.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

More than four out of five arts and science faculty indicated that they would still want to be a professor, lending further support to Clark's contention that faculty are relatively satisfied with their careers. Biological science faculty were the arts and science faculty most likely to indicate that they would not want to be a professor if they had to choose over again. This finding suggests that biological science faculty are slightly less satisfied than other arts and science faculty with their career choice. This dissatisfaction may reflect, in part, the perception by biological science faculty that they could be making considerably more money in business and industry than in academe. Fine arts faculty members were the arts and science faculty next most likely to indicate that they would not be a professor if they had to choose over again. This finding provides additional evidence that fine arts faculty are less satisfied with their career choice than other arts and science faculty.

The number of faculty who are satisfied overall with their job, broken down by disciplinary group, is presented in Table 4.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

More than two out of three arts and science faculty indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied overall with their job. The fact that a sizable number of faculty appear to be satisfied overall with their job provides additional support for Clark's assertion that faculty are relatively satisfied with their work life. Fine arts faculty are once again the least likely of arts and science faculty to report being satisfied or very satisfied overall with their job. Coupled with their greater likelihood of having considered leaving academe and in choosing a career other than professor, this finding provides further evidence that fine arts faculty are the least satisfied about their careers of all arts and science faculty. Physical science faculty, on the other hand, are the group most likely to indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their job. This greater job satisfaction may be, in part, the result of the high prestige usually accorded physical science faculty on most college and university campuses. It may also reflect, in part,

the availability of more federal grant money to physical science faculty than to most other arts and science faculty. The availability of federal money for research support would be expected to increase overall job satisfaction.

Prediction of Career Satisfaction

Table 5 presents the variables which had significant weights in the prediction of career satisfaction for each of the five arts and science disciplinary types.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Only those predictors which were significant for three or more of the disciplinary types will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Salary

The base salary of faculty, converted to a 12-month basis, is a positive predictor of faculty career satisfaction for all five disciplinary types. The higher the salary, the more satisfied with their careers faculty tend to be. Salary was posited to be an important source of extrinsic motivation for workers in the dual factor theory (Herzberg, 1959). Salary is clearly an important extrinsic motivator for arts and science faculty in this study as well.

Salary was the most influential predictor of career satisfaction among physical science faculty. The importance of salary for physical science faculty corresponds with actual differences in faculty salaries across disciplinary types. More than fifteen percent of physical science faculty make $70,000 or more, compared with only twelve percent or less of faculty in other arts and science disciplines (Astin, Korn & Dey, 1991). Since more physical science faculty make high salaries than other arts and science faculty, salary would be expected to have the strongest positive influence on career satisfaction for this disciplinary group. Base salary was the least influential predictor of career satisfaction among biological science faculty. Biological scientists ranked third among the arts and science groups in the percentage of faculty who make

salaries of $70,000 or more. Despite the relatively high number of biological scientists who make high salaries, their career satisfaction appears to be less influenced by money than other arts and science faculty. This may be the result of a self-selection process whereby biological scientists who place a higher value on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivators choose academe over more lucrative positions in business and industry.

Primary Interest in Research

Primary interest in research was another variable which is a significant predictor of career satisfaction for faculty across all five disciplinary types. The more likely faculty are to indicate their interests lie primarily in research, the less satisfied they are with their careers. One would expect that faculty whose interests lie primarily in research are more heavily involved in research and writing than other faculty. There was a moderately strong correlation between a primary interest in research and the number of hours per week spent in research and writing (r=.56). Faculty who are heavily involved in research and writing may have less time and energy available to interact with students in teaching and advising and in service to their department and institution. Research-minded faculty may come to resent the encroachment of teaching and service activities on the time that they have available for research and writing. This resentment may lead to a lowering of their satisfaction with the academic career. A competing explanation is that research-minded faculty may actually find considerable satisfaction in teaching and advising students and in service to the department and institution, but may have little time to devote to these activities because of the time demands of research and writing. The lack of adequate time and energy to become more involved with these intrinsically motivating teaching and service activities may thus lead to a lessening of faculty satisfaction with their careers.

The negative influence of research interest on career satisfaction was strongest among biological and physical sciences faculties. Given the strong research norm

which exists in the sciences, it is perhaps not surprising that research interest had such a strong negative influence among these disciplines. Biological and physical science faculty may resent the number of hours that they have to spend in scheduled teaching as interfering with the time that they have available for research. Despite the strong research norms in the sciences, more faculty in the sciences spend significant amounts of time in teaching than do other arts and science faculty. More than two-fifths of science faculty reported 13 or more hours per week spent in teaching, versus only one-fifth of humanities and social science faculty (Astin, Korn & Dey, 1991). As a consequence of this greater involvement in teaching, biological and physical science faculty may have less time and energy available to devote to research. The constraining of time and energy available for research and writing by involvement in teaching would be expected to lower the career satisfaction of research-minded faculty in the sciences. The negative influence of a primary interest in research is considerably less in the humanities and social science fields. Faculty in the humanities and social sciences may feel less pressure to engage in research and writing, since the norms of research tend to be less pronounced in these disciplinary fields. Faculty in these disciplines may also have more time for research and writing, since they are less likely than faculty in the sciences to teach 13 or more hours per week.

Collaborative Research Environment

Collaboration in research was a significant predictor of career satisfaction for faculty in three out of five disciplinary groups: biological sciences, physical sciences, and social sciences. Faculty who described their research or scholarly endeavors as being conducted in collaboration with others are more satisfied with their careers than other faculty. The positive influence of collaboration in research or scholarship on career satisfaction may be attributable to the greater involvement with colleagues that such collaboration promotes. The greater the involvement with colleagues, the more

one would expect faculty to be satisfied with their careers. Collaboration may also reduce the isolation faculty feel competing rather than working with their peers in research.

The disciplinary differences in the influence of collaboration on career satisfaction corresponds with different models of disciplinary research and scholarship. Faculty in the sciences, and, to a lesser degree, the social sciences, are more likely to engage in collaborative research than their counterparts in the humanities and the fine arts. In part this is a function of the greater availability of federal funding for research, particularly in the sciences. Federal funding of research promotes collaborative efforts between teams of scientists working on a project. The relative absence of federal funding for research and scholarship in the humanities and the fine arts does not promote such collaborative efforts. As a consequence, faculty in the humanities and the fine arts are much more likely to work alone than their counterparts in the sciences. Clearly, disciplinary differences in federal funding helps to determine the amount of collaboration in research, which, in turn, influences faculty career satisfaction.

Public Control

Public control of institutions had a significant influence on the career satisfaction of three different disciplinary groups: humanities, social sciences and physical sciences. Faculty in these groups were less satisfied with their careers if they were working in a public rather than a private institution. Faculty in public institutions may have to teach larger classes than their counterparts in the private sector, which may require them to spend more hours in preparation for teaching, particularly in grading. Faculty in the public sector may also be expected to spend more time in service to the community than their counterparts in the private sector. These greater expectations for teaching and service may come at the expense of the time faculty in public institutions have for research and writing, and may serve to lower their career satisfaction.

Working in a publicly controlled institution had its strongest influence on physical science faculty. As mentioned earlier, physical science faculty are more likely to teach 13 or more hours in scheduled teaching than faculty in other arts and science disciplines. If classes tend to be larger in public than private institutions, physical science faculty in public institutions would have to spend more time preparing for teaching than their counterparts in private institutions. The greater expenditure of time devoted to teaching may come at the expense of time devoted to research and writing, which has a positive influence on the career satisfaction of physical science faculty. Thus, physical science faculty in public institutions may have lower career satisfaction than their private counterparts because they have less time available for research and writing.

Implications for Theory and Policy

Clark's contention that disciplinary differences are crucial in understanding faculty culture receives support from this study. There are significant differences between arts and science disciplinary groups in career satisfaction. To fully understand the career satisfaction of arts and science faculty, one needs to disaggregate the data into more discrete groupings. The study disaggregated arts and science faculty into five broad disciplinary groupings: biological sciences, fine arts, humanities, physical sciences, and social sciences. In so doing, some of the hidden differences between arts and science groups were revealed.

Clark appears correct in contending that the American professoriate is relatively satisfied with their careers. The evidence for this conclusion comes from the different measures of career satisfaction for arts and science faculty used in this study -- almost two-thirds of faculty have not considered leaving academe, more than four out of five indicated that they would still want to be a professor, and more than two out of three indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied overall with their jobs. Clearly, the majority of arts and science faculty in the American academic profession are relatively

satisfied with their careers. The aggregate data, however, hide differences between disciplinary groups along the various dimensions of career satisfaction. In particular, fine arts faculty appear less satisfied with their careers -- they are more likely than other arts and science faculty to have considered leaving academe, to not still want to be a professor, and to be less satisfied overall with their job. The reasons why fine arts faculty are less satisfied with their careers than other arts and science faculty are not readily apparent from this study. One reason may be that more fine arts faculty spend 13 or more hours in scheduled teaching than all other arts and science faculty. The number of hours spent in scheduled teaching had a significant negative influence on career satisfaction only for fine arts faculty. Another reason may be that fine arts faculty may face difficulty in having their creative works count as alternatives to publications in tenure and promotion decisions. Greater difficulty in achieving tenure and promotion would be expected to lower the career satisfaction of fine arts faculty. Clearly, additional research is needed to determine the reasons for the lower career satisfaction of fine arts faculty.

Astin's contention that involvement theory can be extended beyond students to explain faculty development and satisfaction also receives support in this study. The more involved arts and science faculty were with their colleagues in collaborative research or scholarly endeavors, the more satisfied they are with their careers. Clearly, any policies which promote collaboration of faculty in research or scholarly endeavors should be encouraged. As discussed previously, federal funding plays a large part in promoting collaboration between faculty, particularly in the sciences. Making more federal funding available for research and scholarship in the humanities and fine arts disciplines might serve to change the individualistic model of these disciplines towards the more collaborative model of the sciences. Administrators also might begin to assign greater weight in tenure and promotion decisions to joint

authorship in articles and books. This action would encourage faculty to collaborate more with one another on research or scholarly endeavors.

Herzberg's dual factor theory predicts that money serves as a strong extrinsic motivator of worker's job satisfaction. Money was certainly a strong extrinsic motivator for faculty in all disciplinary types in this study as well. Clearly, one way to improve the career satisfaction of arts and science faculty is by increasing their base salary. Given the current economic situation in many states, however, raising faculty salaries may not be a feasible option for many institutions, particularly in the public sector. Administrators may be able to offset somewhat the lack of additional money for faculty salaries by increasing some of the intrinsic motivators of career satisfaction, such as faculty control over time and faculty authority in governance.

Another intrinsic motivator appears to be the rewards inherent in doing academic work through research and scholarship. The more faculty interests lie in research rather than teaching, the less satisfied they are with an academic career. Given the current academic labor market, many research-minded faculty may have had to take jobs in institutions that emphasize teaching over research. This mismatch of faculty interests with institutional needs may continue until the academic labor market improves sufficiently to permit more faculty mobility. One solution might be to encourage potential faculty members whose interests lie heavily in research to consider taking jobs in institutions other than higher education, such as research academies and think tanks. This would allow their interests to be in closer alignment with institutional expectations for research. An alternative solution might be for academic institutions to lighten the teaching and service loads of research-minded faculty to allow them additional time to pursue their interests in research and writing. This might be accomplished through a redistribution of faculty teaching and service loads, with teaching-minded faculty carrying heavier teaching and service loads and research-minded faculty carrying lighter teaching and service loads. Reward systems

would obviously have to change to reflect this redistribution of faculty effort. A more likely response is for institutions to maintain their present reward structures, but to find more creative ways of lightening the teaching and service loads of research-minded faculty. Clearly, the career satisfaction of research-minded faculty can be improved if more time can be found for them to engage in research and writing.

Conclusions

In conclusion, examining disciplinary differences is crucial for understanding the career satisfaction of arts and science faculty. Using only aggregate data, one is left with the impression that all arts and science faculty are relatively satisfied with their careers. Using data disaggregated by broad disciplinary groups, however, one finds that fine arts faculty are actually less satisfied than other arts and science faculty with their careers. Salary and interest in research are significant predictors of career satisfaction for all arts and science faculty. Only when separate analyses are run by broad disciplinary groups, however, does one find that the influence of these predictors varies considerably between groups. Thus, Clark is correct in arguing that researchers in higher education need to disaggregate by discipline in order to better understand the many different tribes which make up the American academic profession.

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Table 1

Oneway Analysis of Variance for
Career Satisfaction by Disciplinary Type

Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Probability
Between Group	4	226.1	56.5	19.5	.0000
Within Group	13984	40543.4	2.9		
Total	13988	40769.5			

Table 2

Considered Leaving Academe by Disciplinary Type

Considered Leaving Academe	Fine Arts Faculty	Humanities Faculty	Social Science Faculty	Biological Science Faculty	Physical Science Faculty	All A & S Faculty
Yes	40.6	28.9	36.5	34.9	33.2	35.0
No	59.4	71.1	63.5	65.1	66.8	65.0

p<.00000

Table 3

Faculty Career Satisfaction

Still Want to be a Professor	Fine Arts Faculty	Humanities Faculty	Social Science Faculty	Biological Science Faculty	Physical Science Faculty	All A & S Faculty
Yes	79.0	82.4	83.1	79.5	82.9	81.6
No	8.0	6.8	6.7	9.1	6.4	7.3
Not Sure	13.0	10.9	10.2	11.4	10.7	11.2

p<.0000

Table 4

Overall Job Satisfaction by Disciplinary Type

Overall Job Satisfaction	Fine Arts Faculty	Humanities Faculty	Social Science Faculty	Biological Science Faculty	Physical Science Faculty	All A & S Faculty
Satisfied or Very Satisfied	66.1	70.7	69.5	69.5	70.8	69.3
Marginally Satisfied	27.0	23.9	24.8	24.9	24.4	25.0
Not Satisfied	6.9	5.5	5.6	5.6	4.8	5.7

p<.0000

25

Table 5

Prediction of Career Satisfaction by Disciplinary Type

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients				
	Fine Arts Faculty	Humanities Faculty	Social Science Faculty	Biological Science Faculty	Physical Science Faculty
Mother's Education			.05		
Primary Interest in Research	-.32	-.31	-.30	-.46	-.46
Base Salary	.16	.17	.15	.13	.23
Collaborative Research Environment			.22	.30	.23
Undergraduate FTE	-8.80				
Number of Full-Time Faculty	9.81				
Public Control		-.34	-.22		-.37
Hours spent in Scheduled Teaching	-.09				
Hours spent in other Administration				-.10	
Hours spent in committee work			-.12		
Hours spent in advising/counseling		-.14			
Hours spent in research/writing					.08
Number of Days Off-Campus for Prof. Mtgs.		.14			
Number of Writings Accepted in last 2 yrs.			.18	.19	
Number of general education courses taught		-.09			
Participated in Faculty Development Program			.18		
Participated in women's/minority seminar			.23		
Commute a long distance to work				-.31	
Served as paid consultant			-.18		
Taught a developmental/remedial course				-.50	

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Number of general education courses taught		-.09			
Participated in Faculty Development Program			.18		
Participated in women's/minority seminar			.23		
Commute a long distance to work				-.31	
Served as paid consultant			-.18		
Taught a developmental/remedial course				-.50	

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